

CLAIMS:

1. An apparatus for producing bread from a batter mixture, the apparatus comprising:

a flat cooking surface;

5 a heating element arranged to generate heat below the cooking surface in a cooking position of the cooking surface;

a batter dispenser arranged to dispense batter directly onto the cooking surface;

10 a cooling area spaced from the cooking surface in the cooking position thereof; and

a transfer mechanism arranged to transfer cooked batter from the cooking surface to the cooling area.

15 2. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the batter dispenser is arranged to dispense the batter at a plurality of locations above the cooking surface.

3. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the batter dispenser is movable from a stored position spaced from the cooking surface to a dispensing position above the cooking surface in which batter is dispensed from the batter dispenser.

20 4. The apparatus according to Claim 3 wherein the batter dispenser includes a source of batter and wherein the batter dispenser is arranged to recirculate the source of batter in the stored position thereof.

25 5. The apparatus according to Claim 3 wherein the batter dispenser is movable across the cooking surface in the dispensing position for dispensing at plural locations above the cooking surface.

6. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the batter

dispenser includes a metering mechanism arranged to dispense metered amounts of batter and a pump arranged to supply batter under pressure to the metering mechanism.

5 7. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein there is provided a batter spreading mechanism arranged to spread batter dispensed onto the cooking surface about the cooking surface.

8. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the spreading mechanism comprises a series of actuators arranged to displace the cooking surface in a rocking type motion.

10 9. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the cooking surface includes a flat bottom and sides extending upwardly from a periphery of the flat bottom and wherein there is provided a cover arranged to span between the sides of the cooking surface spaced upwardly from the flat bottom.

15 10. The apparatus according to Claim 9 wherein there is provided at least one steam hole in the cover arranged to permit escape of steam therethrough.

11. The apparatus according to Claim 9 wherein there is provided an actuator arranged to displace the cover away from the cooking surface when a prescribed cooking time has expired.

20 12. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the transfer mechanism includes a lift arm which is movable between a lifting position above the cooking surface and a depositing position above the cooling area, the lift arm includes a chamber having an opening at a free end of the lift arm which is arranged to be subjected to a vacuum pressure below atmospheric pressure, the opening being arranged to engage cooked batter on the cooking surface in the lifting position
25 of the lift arm for supporting the cooked batter on the free end of the lift arm.

13. The apparatus according to Claim 12 wherein the lift arm is

movable both generally vertically and generally horizontally between the lifting position and the depositing position for displacing cooked batter upwardly from the cooking surface and laterally to the cooling area.

14. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the transfer
5 mechanism includes pneumatic controls arranged to displace the lift arm between the lifting and depositing positions.

15. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the flat cooking
surface, the heating element, the batter dispenser and the transfer mechanism are
contained within a housing which includes a cooling exhaust fan arranged to direct
10 air externally from the housing.

16. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the batter
dispenser and the transfer mechanism include respective actuators arranged to
actuate movement thereof and wherein there is provided a controller arranged to
automatically control operation of the actuators and the heating element following a
15 prescribed order of operations.

17. The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the controller is a
programmable microprocessor based controller permitting adjustment of a
prescribed cooking temperature and a prescribed cooking duration of the batter.

18. A method of cooking batter to produce flat leavened bread, the
20 method comprising:

providing a batter mixture;

providing a flat cooking surface;

providing a dispenser arranged to dispense the batter mixture directly
onto the cooking surface;

25 dispensing the batter mixture onto the cooking surface;

cooking the batter mixture on the cooking surface by heating the

cooking surface in a cooking position of the cooking surface;

providing a transfer mechanism arranged to transfer cooked batter from the cooking surface to a cooling area spaced from the cooking surface in the cooking position thereof; and

5 transferring the cooked batter from the cooking surface to the cooling area using the transfer mechanism.

19. The method according to Claim 18 wherein the cooked batter comprises injera bread and wherein the method includes providing a batter mixture including water and teff flour.

10 20. The method according to Claim 18 wherein the method includes covering the cooking surface while cooking the batter mixture with a cover spaced above the cooking surface.